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STATE FOR EAP/MTS, G: JFERRAO, S/P: KVOLKER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/04/2027

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [MY](#)

SUBJECT: MALAYSIA: IDENTIFYING INDIVIDUALS FOR ISLAM AND
DEMOCRACY DISCUSSION

REF: A. STATE 116583 (PROMOTING COMPLEMENTARY NATURE OF

ISLAM AND DEMOCRACY)

[1](#)B. KUALA LUMPUR 560 (MUFTI PROMOTES TOLERANCE AND
REFORM)

Classified By: Classified By: Political Section Chief Mark D. Clark for
reasons 1.4 (b and d).

[1](#)1. (C) Post recommends one Malaysian scholar and one
influential Islamic cleric as possible candidates for ref A
events.

-- Professor Emeritus Osman Bakar, of the International
Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), is an
outstanding scholar of Islam who has published articles on
various aspects of Islam and democracy. He is a former
visiting professor at Georgetown's Center of Muslim-Christian
Understanding with a Masters in Comparative Religion and PhD.
in Philosophy of Science/Islamic Philosophy from Temple
University. Highly respected in Malaysia, he has spoken
previously at forums on subjects such as pluralism in
Malaysian society and terrorism in Southeast Asia. He has
accepted Embassy-sponsored speaking engagements in the past.

-- Mohammad Asri Zainul Abidin, the Mufti of Perlis, is
an outspoken liberal Islamic leader in Malaysia (ref B). He
is the first Mufti appointed by Prime Minister Abdullah
Badawi and reflects the Prime Minister's views on the
importance of tolerance in Islamic practice. He has
excellent Middle Eastern and Malaysian educational
credentials. Asri advocates for individuals' rights to
interpret their religion and propagates approaches to the
Quran in line with modern circumstances. However, he would
very likely avoid public linkages with the USG. Ref B
provides further background on the Mufti of Perlis.

[1](#)2. (C) Post recommends ISTAC as an institute that is working
on initiatives that support the compatibility of Islam and
democracy. ISTAC is a key local partner of the Asia
Foundation in the context of the current DRL-funded project
on Islam in Malaysia.

[1](#)3. (C) Post has queried the Foreign Ministry as to
Malaysia's anticipated delegation to the November Community
of Democracies meeting. Our Foreign Ministry contacts were
unaware of the event. Post requests information on how the
information for the November CD meeting has been or will be
conveyed to the Malaysian government, so that we may follow
up in an effective manner.

LAFLEUR